

# Glossary

## Terms That Appear in the Illinois Reading Assessment Frameworks

Below is a listing of terms and their definitions from the ISAT Reading Frameworks. Illinois educators use these definitions as a guide when developing items for the reading assessment. The definitions were developed with the assistance of the members of the Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee.

### A

**Affix** – A word element added to the beginning (prefix) or the end (suffix) of a word root to alter its meaning or form, (e.g., *pre-*, *-ful*, and *-ly*)

**Alliteration** – Repetition of an initial consonant sound across syllables or words, (e.g., *sleds sliding on snowy slopes*)

**Analogy** – A comparison of two things that are similar in some way. Writers often use analogy to explain something unfamiliar by comparing it to something familiar (e.g., *A street light is like a star*).

**Antonym** – A word that means the opposite of another word (e.g., *happy, sad*)

**Author’s message** – The main idea, theme, or lesson the author wants to communicate to the reader.

**Author’s purpose** – The author’s intent; to describe, entertain, inform, persuade, teach a lesson, etc.

**Autobiography** – A history of a person’s life written by that person

### B

**Base word** – A word that stands on its own after all prefixes and suffixes have been removed (e.g., *govern in government; agree in disagreement*); also known as Root word

**Biography** – An account of a person’s life written by another person

### C

**Cause and effect** – A way of organizing text that emphasizes the causal relationships between two or more events or situations

**Character** – A person, animal, or imaginary creature in a literary work

**Character foil** – A secondary character who contrasts with the main character and, in so doing, highlights various elements of the main character's personality.

**Character motivation** – That which causes a character to behave in various ways under various circumstances

**Character trait** – A noun or adjective used to describe the behavior or personality feature of a character (e.g., *careless, dull, loyal, rude*).

**Chronological order** – A way of organizing text that emphasizes the order in which things happen (through time)

**Climax** – The point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action in a literary composition

**Comedy** – The use of humor in the arts - it also means a performance that relies heavily on humor. The term originally comes from theater, where it simply referred to a play with a happy ending.

**Comparison and contrast** – A way of organizing text that emphasizes the similarities and differences of two or more things

**Compound word** – A word made from combining words, (e.g., *riverbank* or *houseboat*).

**Conclusion** – The ending of a passage

**Conflict** – Opposition in a work of drama or fiction between characters or forces

**Connection** – Activating prior knowledge before, during, or after reading using text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world associations

**Connotation** – A word's implied or associated meaning beyond its dictionary definition. For example, *home* implies warmth and family, whereas *house* implies a building.

**Consonance** – The repetition of a consonant sound - *Cracker Jack*<sup>®</sup> is an exemplar of consonance in advertising.

**Consonant** – A speech sound that is not a vowel

**Context** – The part of a text that surrounds a word or passage and may help to clarify its meaning

**Context clues** – Information from text surrounding a word or phrase that helps the reader figure out meaning or pronunciation

## D

**Descriptive writing** – Writing to describe something, someone, or some place in a way that shows the readers, rather than tells - this is done by using descriptive language and details.

**Dialogue** – The words spoken by the characters

**Digraphs** – Pairs of letters that can occur in plain text language

**Drama** – A term generally used to refer to a literary form involving parts written for actors to perform. Dramas can be performed in a variety of media: live performance, film, or television.

**Dramatic irony** – This occurs when the reader or audience understands more about the events of a story than a character.

**Drawing Conclusions** – Making a sensible decision after considering the details or facts in a passage (e.g., *look for clues in the passage, make connections between pieces of information, consider information that is not directly stated, use prior knowledge*)

## E

**Entertain** – To amuse or divert in order to hold the attention of an audience or its participants

**Essay** – A short article on a single subject written from the author's personal viewpoint

**Explicit** – Directly stated in the text

**Expository writing** – The writer gives information, explains, defines, or describes something. Expository texts include essays, speeches, journals, newspaper and magazine articles, and directions, among other things.

**Extend** – To draw conclusions or make connections, or make predictions that go beyond what is stated in the text

**Etymology** – The origin and development of a word, traced back as far as possible in time.

## F

**Fable** – A story meant to teach a useful lesson that often has animals that speak and act like humans (e.g., *The Hare and the Tortoise*).

**Fact** – Something that is known to have happened, to be true, or to exist

**Falling action** – The series of events that take place after the climax and lead to the resolution or conclusion

**Fairy tale** – A story featuring folkloric characters such as fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, giants, and others - the fairy tale is a sub-class of the folktale (e.g., *The Princess and the Pea*).

**Fiction** – A literary work based on the imagination and not necessarily on fact

**Figurative language** – Language that is interpreted imaginatively rather than literally (e.g., idiom, metaphor, and simile)

**First person** – A story told by the narrator who is usually a participant and observer of the action

**Flashback** – A way of presenting events that occurred earlier than the current time in a narrative. An advantage of using a flashback is that a story can start in the middle or the end to get the reader interested, and then fill in what led up to that point.

**Folktales** – An account, legend, or story that is passed along orally from generation to generation. Folktales are of unknown authorship (e.g., *The Gingerbread Boy*).

**Foreshadowing** – Hinting or indicating in some way something that will happen later in the text

## G

**Generalization** – Reasoning from detailed facts to broad principles

**Genre** – A category of text having a particular form, techniques, and content, such as biography, poetry, or short story

**Graphic organizer** – A visual method of organizing information, such as a content map, outline (e.g., Venn diagram, Semantic web)

## H

**Historical fiction** – Stories set in the past that try to recreate the aura of a time past, reconstruct characters, events, movements, ways of life and spirit of days gone by (e.g., *Train to Somewhere*).

**Homograph** – Two words that have the same spelling but different meanings and/or origins and may differ in pronunciation (e.g., the *bow* of a ship and a hair *bow*)

**Homonym** – A word that sounds or looks the same as another word, but has a different meaning, such as *pool* table and swimming *pool*. A homonym can be either a homophone or a homograph.

**Homophone** – A word which is pronounced identically with another word, but is spelled differently and has a different meaning (e.g., *so/sew, bough/bow*).

**Hyperbole** – Figurative language in which exaggeration is used for heightened or comic effect (e.g., *I've seen that a million times*).

## I

**Idiom** – A phrase that means something different from the literal meaning of the words in the phrase (e.g., *raining cats and dogs*)

**Imagery** – Words and phrases that create vivid sensory experiences for the reader

**Implicit** – Not directly stated in the text, but may be inferred from the text; *reading between the lines*.

**Inference** – A conclusion based on evidence about something that is not explicitly stated – a logical guess based on evidence, experience, and prior knowledge

**Inform** – To impart knowledge of some fact, state of affairs, or event

**Informational writing** – Nonfiction text such as magazine and newspaper articles, reports, and textbooks.

**Irony** – A contrast between what is expected and what actually exists or happens (e.g., *In "Ransom of Red Chief," it is ironic that Red Chief enjoys being kidnapped.*) - the three kinds of irony used most often are *situational, dramatic, and verbal*.

## J, K, L

**Legend** – A story handed down from the past based on past events. The story is often based on an actual event or person in history, but overtime, the facts of the story have been exaggerated (e.g., *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*).

**Literal meaning** – The exact, primary meaning of a word or text

**Literary device** – A technique such as alliteration, flashback, foreshadowing, hyperbole, idiom, imagery, metaphor, onomatopoeia, rhyme, simile, personification

**Literary elements** – The commonly accepted structures that contribute to the whole of a story, most commonly character, characterization, setting, conflict, resolution, main idea, supporting ideas, plot, and theme.

**Literary language** – Language typical of literature, which may involve use of literary devices and rich imagery

**Literary text** – Passages such as biography, drama, poetry, short stories, and novels

## M

**Main character** – The most important person, animal, or imaginary creature in a literary work

**Main idea** – The most important point a writer wishes to express. It can be the central idea of an entire work or a thought expressed in the topic sentence of a paragraph.

**Metaphor** – A figure of speech in which one thing is compared with another, sometimes in an unusual way (e.g., *I am a bear in the morning*). The comparative words *like* or *as* are not used in a metaphor.

**Mood** – The feeling created in the reader's mind by a literary work. Setting, tone, and events influence mood (e.g., *hopeful or bitter*).

**Myth** – A traditional tale of unknown authorship involving gods and goddesses or other supernatural beings. A myth often attempts to explain some aspect of nature. There are, for instance, myths about the creation of the world, the seasons, and animals in nearly every culture of the world (e.g., *Hercules*).

## N

**Narrative writing** – Narrative writing tells a story or part of a story.

**Nonfiction writing** – Nonfiction writing portrays events that actually occurred and/or characters that actually existed.

## O

**Onomatopoeia** – Refers to the pronunciation of a word that imitates the sound associated with its object or action (e.g., *hiss* or *buzz*).

**Opinion** – A person's ideas and thoughts about something - it is an assessment, judgment, or evaluation.

## P

**Personification** – A figure of speech in which human characteristics are attributed to animals, plants, objects, and ideas (e.g., *a smiling moon*, *a happy sun*)

**Perspective** – See Point of View

**Persuade** – To cause somebody to adopt a certain position, belief, or course of action

**Persuasive writing** – Writing with the intent to alter the reader's opinion about a subject

**Plot** – The arrangement of events or main story in a literary text

**Plural** – The form of a noun that indicates more than one

**Poetic writing/Poetry** – Language arranged in lines, with a regular rhythm and often a definite rhyme scheme. Nontraditional poetry does away with regular rhythm and rhyme, although it usually is set up in lines. The richness of its suggestions, the sounds of its words, and the strong feelings evoked by its lines is what distinguishes poetry from other forms of literature.

**Point of view** – The perspective or beliefs of the author - the perspective from which a story is told or the passage being written [e.g., *First person*, *Second person*, *Third person (objective)*, *Third person (limited)*, *Third person omniscient*]

**Prior Knowledge** – A combination of the learner's pre-existing attitudes, experiences, and knowledge

**Prefix** – An affix added to the beginning of a word root that affects its meaning or form, such as *be-* in *befriend*.

**Problem** – A state of difficulty or conflict that needs to be resolved

## Q, R

**Repetition** – The return of a word, phrase, stanza form, or effect in any form of literature. Repetition is an effective literary device that may bring comfort, suggest order, or add special meaning to a piece of literature.

**Resolution** – The point in a story at which the conflict or problem is solved

**Rhyme** – The similarity in sound between two words (e.g., *dome* and *home*)

**Rhyme scheme** – The pattern established by the arrangement of rhymes in a stanza or poem

**Rising action** – The events in a story or play that build suspense and occur before the climax

**Root Word** – See **Base Word**

## S

**Science fiction** – Stories that violate natural laws, such as time, space, and or being

**Second person** – Any writing told from the perspective of *you* (e.g., first chapter of *Winnie the Pooh*, *recipes*, or *instructions*). This style of writing is not very common.

**Semantic webs** – A method used to map important concepts within a passage.

**Sensory detail** – The incorporation of the five senses (*sight*, *sound*, *smell*, *touch*, and *taste*) to create imagery and strengthen writing

**Sequence of events** – The order of events in a passage.

**Setting** – The time and place in which the events of a story occur

**Short story** – A genre or form of prose fiction - shorter than a novel, and normally dealing with fewer characters and less action

**Simile** – A figure of speech that uses *like*, *as*, or *as if* to directly compare two different things (e.g., *the dog sat as still as a stone*)

**Solution** – The way in which the conflict or problem of a story is resolved (*resolution*)

**Situational irony** – This occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate.

**Story elements** – Parts of a story such as characters, plot, point of view, problem, relationships, sequence of events, setting, solution, and theme

**Style** – A writer's unique way of using word choice, sentence structure and organization of to express their ideas.

**Subplot** – The secondary events in a story that mix with the main storyline in which the key characters and or theme is more fully explored.

**Suffix** – An affix added at the end of a word root that affects the meaning or form, such as *-ly* in *friendly*.

**Summarize** – To express just the major ideas and most important supporting details from a text

**Supporting character** – A character of a book, play, movie, TV show, or other form of storytelling usually used only to give dimension to a main character.

**Supporting detail** – The specific facts and ideas that explain or illustrate the major ideas in a text

**Symbols/Symbolism** – The use of concrete objects to represent an emotion, belief, or any other type of abstract principle (e.g., *a red rose suggesting love*)

**Synonym** – A word that means the same as another word (e.g., *car* and *automobile*)

## T

**Tall tale** – A humorously exaggerated story about impossible events (e.g., *Paul Bunyan*)

**Technical writing** – Language that is precise and is oriented to conveying factual information (e.g., *an operating manual for a DVD player*)

**Text** – The written or printed material that forms the main body of a publication

**Text features** – Elements of a text that give additional information to the reader, such as captions, charts, diagrams, graphs, headings, illustrations, maps, schedules, special type, tables, and timelines

**Text structure** – The way in which a text is organized (e.g., *cause/effect*, *chronological*, *spatial*, and *comparison/contrast*)

**Text-to-self** – Refers to connections readers make between the text and their experience or background knowledge

**Text-to-text** – Refers to connections that readers make between one text and another text

**Text-to-world** – Refers to connections that readers make between the text and larger issues and ideas

**Theme** – Life lesson, meaning, moral, or message about life or human nature that is communicated by a literary work

**Third person (limited)** – In literature, a non-participating narrator provides the reader with all the emotions and ideas of one central character.

**Third person (objective)** – In literature, a narrator tells a story without detailing any of the characters' thoughts. This point of view can be described as "a fly on the wall" and is often used in newspaper articles. For instance, the writer does not use *I*, *me*, or *my*.

**Third person (omniscient)** – In literature, a narrator can shift focus from character to character with knowledge of everyone's thoughts and of events of which no single character would be aware.

**Tone** – The author's attitude toward the subject, characters, or readers, such as friendly, teasing, etc - it is comparable to tone of voice in speech.

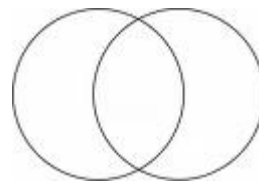
**Topic** – The subject of a text

**Tragedy** – A literary work in which the main character meets an unhappy or disastrous end. Unlike comedy, which often portrays a main character of weak nature, tragedy often involves the faults of a main character of high stature.

## U, V

**Understatement** – The opposite of hyperbole, it refers to a figure of speech that says less than is intended. Understatement usually has an ironic effect, and sometimes may be used for comic purposes (e.g., *A little bedtime snack* – to describe a seven-course meal).

**Venn diagram** – Graphic organizer often used to help students compare and contrast two items. Characteristics are listed in each section of the diagram, with shared characteristics listed in the overlapping section.



**Verbal irony** – A character says one thing but really means something different

**Verse** – Any composition in lines of more or less regular rhythm, often (but not always) ending in rhymes

**Viewpoint** – The perspective or beliefs from which the subject of the text is presented

## W, X, Y, Z

**Word root** – A root is the basic element of a word, and it is the foundation on which the meaning of a word is based. Many roots are actual words: *graph* (a diagram) and *term* (a fixed time or date). These roots can have other elements. Many roots do need other elements. For example, the roots *archy* (government) and *dox* (opinion or belief) must be combined with other word elements (e.g., prefixes and suffixes) in order to form a word.

**Word origins** – The origins of affixes and word roots – knowledge of word origins can help readers understand the meanings of unfamiliar words.

## **Description of Edits**

**6-27-2008** – Edited the definitions for mood, tone, and tragedy